

Eastern Illinois University
The Keep

Spring 2004

2004

Spring 1-15-2004

ENG 2011G-004: Literature, the self, and the world: fiction

Ruth Hoberman
Eastern Illinois University

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2004



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoberman, Ruth, "ENG 2011G-004: Literature, the self, and the world: fiction" (2004). *Spring 2004*. 73.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/english_syllabi_spring2004/73

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the 2004 at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spring 2004 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

English 2011G Literature, the self, and the world: fiction
 Spring 2004
 Office hours: MWF2-3:30
 e-mail: cfrh@eiu.edu phone: 581-6981

Ruth Hoberman
 Coleman 3755

Texts: Cather, *O Pioneers* (1913)

Hemingway, *In Our Time* (1925)
 Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)
 Kerouac, *On the Road* (1957)
 Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1969)
 Robinson, *Housekeeping* (1981)
 Carver, *What We Talk about When We Talk about Love* (1982)
 Dunn, *Geek Love* (1989)
 Alvarez, *How the Garcia girls Lost their Accent* (1992)
 Alexie, *Smoke Signals* (1998)

Goals: The main aim of the class is to deepen your understanding of and appreciation for fiction. I'm hoping that among the many writers we read, you'll find one or two with whom you can really connect, and that you go out of the class more likely to keep reading fiction in the future.

The course's title (Literature, the self, and the world) implies that reading fiction will also help you locate yourself more clearly in relation to the world. Many of the stories deal with individuals in search of insight or meaning; recurring themes include maturation, self-discovery, love, and identity. Because all the works on the syllabus are from twentieth-century America, interesting comparisons and common themes will emerge, including the question of what "America" means to different people.

This is a writing-intensive class. You may submit a paper from this class as part of your EWP.

Policies: English Department statement on plagiarism:

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) --has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

Plan to hand in papers on time. If you're having problems, let me know. Brief writing and on-line assignments must be done **for the assigned class to be acceptable. Essays a week or more late will not be accepted.**

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Requirements/grades

Two essays (2-4 pp., typed): 35% (15/20)
 WebCT responses to reading: 20%
 Midterm and final: 30%
 Participation, in-class writing assignments: 15%

Essay grades will be based on Guidelines for Evaluating Writing Assignments in EIU's English Department. I plan to use number rather than letter grades; this will convert into your final grade as

follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 65-70=D; below 65=F

Because I grade on a 100-point scale, missing assignments (which receive a 0) affect the grade tremendously.

WebCT: At least once per week, I'd like each of you to write a response to the assigned reading (app. 200 words) on the WebCT bulletin board, on-line (If this is inaccessible, give me a 1-page typed response in class instead). The response should reflect your thoughts on the reading due in class at least ONE HOUR BEFORE class discussion of that assignment. I will not give credit for responses entered after the class period in which the relevant assignment has been discussed, though of course you're welcome to make additional comments then. Each posting must include:

1. a response to any relevant earlier postings.
2. a single observation which you develop by citing details from the text (consider responding to question from list attached to syllabus)
3. a direct quotation relevant to your topic from the text under discussion

Please keep comments respectful and on-topic. Grades will be based on the thoughtfulness, precision, depth, and punctuality of your comments. I'll give you feedback via email.

Class participation/involvement: Reading well requires rereading, reading aloud, and discussing. To encourage careful preparation, a substantial portion of your grade is based on class participation and on-line responses. Class participation is hard to evaluate, but here's my advice:

For an A: comment frequently in ways that advance the conversation. This could be bringing up some aspect of the reading we've forgotten, disagreeing with a student or with me, or asking a question of a student or me. Hardly ever miss class.

For a B: attend consistently, look alert, and speak occasionally.

For a C: say nothing and skip class occasionally. Below a C: skip class often and contribute nothing.

Attendance: Because presence in class is essential to involvement, excessive unexcused absences will count directly against this portion of your grade.

Tentative Syllabus

for Wed Jan 14: Cather, *O Pioneers* (1913) ch 1 (pp3-11)

Fri. Jan 16: Cather finish Part I.

Mon. Jan 19: no class

Wed Jan 21: Cather Part II

Fri Jan 23: Cather Part III-IV WebCT w/f

Mon Jan 26: Cather Part V.

Wed Jan 29: Hemingway (1925), pp. 11-49 (through ch. IV).

Fri Jan 31: 52-77 (through ch. VII) WebCT m/w/f

Mon Feb 2: Hemingway 132-57 ("Big Two-hearted River" parts I and II)

Wed Feb 4: Hurston

Fri Feb 6: Hurston WebCT m/w/f

Mon Feb 9: Hurston

Wed Feb 11: Hurston Web CT w/f

Fri Feb 13: no class

Mon Feb 16: movie
Wed Feb 18: movie. Essay #1 due.
Fri Feb 20: Kerouac (1957)

Mon Feb 23: Kerouac
Wed Feb 25: Kerouac
Fri Feb 27: Kerouac WebCT m/w/f

Mon March 2: Kerouac
Wed March 4: Midterm
Fri March 6: Morrison (1969)

Mon March 9: Morrison
Wed March 11: Morrison
Fri March 14: Morrison WebCT m/w/f

March 16-20: Spring Break

Mon March 22: Robinson (1981)
Wed March 24: Robinson
Fri March 26: Robinson WebCT m/w/f

Mon March 29: Carver (1982)
Wed March 31: Carver
Fri. Ap2: Carver WebCT m/w/f

Mon. Ap5: Dunn. (1989)
Wed. Ap 7: Dunn
Fri. Ap 9: Dunn WebCT m/w/f

Mon. Ap 12: Dunn
Wed Ap 14: Dunn
Fri Ap 16: Dunn Web CT m/w/f

Mon Ap 19: Alvarez (1982). First version of essay #2 due.
Wed Ap 21: Alvarez
Fri Ap 23: Alvarez. Web CT m/w/f

Mon Ap 26: Alexie
Wed Ap 28: Alexie
Fri Ap30: Alexie. Final version of essay #2 due.

There will be a noncumulative exam during finals week.

In writing your response to a text, consider answering any ONE of the following questions. ALWAYS begin by responding to earlier poster(s) and ALWAYS include a direct quotation (with parenthetical page number) as part of your response.

Structure/plot

1. what's the significance of the title?
2. what themes or images get set up by the opening paragraph?
3. is there an epigraph or are there allusions to other writers? What is its/their significance?
4. is there a recurring word or image? What is its significance?
5. Is there a passage of particular density or difficulty? What do you make of it?
6. What event happens at the exact center of the work? Is there a turning point? What changes?
7. Look closely at the work's final lines: what loose ends do they tie together? What values do they seem to reinforce?

Characterization

1. What kind of person does a major character seem to be? How like or unlike other characters?
2. Contrast or compare two characters to each other or discuss a conflict between 2 characters.
3. Does a character seem to serve as authorial mouthpiece?
4. Does a character change or gain insight during the course of the story? How?
5. Is there a character who is presented as particularly despicable? In what sense?
6. Look at a character who seems insignificant: why is he/she there?
7. Is there a character who suffers from an internal conflict? explain

Setting

1. where does the story take place? What role does this location play in the plot?
2. what mood is created by descriptions of the setting?
3. what contrasts do shifts in setting set up (inside/outside? City/country? Night/day? Rainy/sunny?)
4. to what extent is the story about the time period in which it was set? Any relevant historical events you need to know about to make sense of it?
5. is there a conflict between a character and his/her environment?

Narrative method

1. who tells the story? How does this affect our understanding of it? Is the narrator omniscient? Aligned with a particular character's viewpoint? Reliable or unreliable?
2. Is it told in chronological order? If not, what leaps take place, and how do they affect our understanding?
3. What personality traits does the narrator have?
4. Imagine a different character telling the story: how might the story change?

Theme, symbols, style

1. what, finally, do you think the story is saying? What insights do we gain, having finished reading it?
2. is there an object or phrase or word that takes on symbolic meaning during the course of the story?
3. What do you notice about sentence length, word choice, descriptiveness, concrete vs. abstract language, the use of fragments, lists, run-ons . . . ? Why might the writer want to write about this particular topic in this way?